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THE PLEA OF THE PETITIONERS STATED AND VINDICATED FROM THE

Miſrepreſentations contained in a late CHARGE delivered by Dr. *Balguy* to the Clergy of the Arch-Deaconry of *Wincheſter*.

Ad ſumma venit hodie ſcripturæ ſacræ abuſus omnifarius, magis vero nefarius contemtus: neque id ſolum apud prophanos homines, ſed etiam apud eos, qui ſibi ſapientes, imo ſpirituales videntur. *Scriptum eſt* quo ipſe DEI filius, in monomachia cum Satana, omnes inſulſus devicit; uſque adeo vileſcit, ut qui ſcriptura *tota* ac *ſola* paſcuntur, ſpiritu carere aut deſipere exiſtimentur. BENGELIUS.

By The Revd Mr. Firebrace of Deptford.

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WHEN controverſies, like the preſent, concerning ſubſcription to human articles of religious faith and doctrine, have been carried on to a conſiderable length, it frequently happens that the original queſtion is obſcured amidſt a variety of collateral ſubjects, which ſometimes have but little connection with the matter in debate.

Controverſial writers ſeem to be fond of drawing conſequences from the poſitions of their antagoniſts, againſt which they will argue as if they were defended, or even allowed by their opponents. This liberty is more remarkable amongſt thoſe who combat with a large majority on their ſide. They truſt the eaſy credulity of their numerous readers, who from many conſiderations

are ready enough to believe them upon their word.

Theſe arts have been too frequently and too ſucceſsfully tried in the diſpute concerning the preſent mode of *ſubſcription*.

The requeſt of the *petitioners* is a plain and ſimple one, viz. that as the ſcriptures contain a full, a clear, and infallible rule of faith and practice to all Chriſtians, they may be made the only teſt of right faith to all Chriſtians: and that if any formulary be appointed by the ſtate to be ſubſcribed by miniſters or others, in order to aſcertain their ſoundneſs of belief, it may be ſuch a one as ſhall involve in it an unfeigned aſſent to the holy ſcriptures and to them only. This requeſt is at leaſt a *plain* one, and, if it be conſidered as the requeſt of men living under the preſent laws of this country, it is a *legal* one; if we add that it is the requeſt of Proteſtants, to a Proteſtant government it is a *juſt* one; and yet this plain, legal, and juſt requeſt has been publickly repreſented as abounding in all the miſchiefs which can poſſibly befall the church, or ruin the ſtate.

Unjuſt and even ridiculous as this accuſation is, it becomes important when it is urged by men whoſe ſtation, or character for abilities make them reſpectable. This is the caſe with Dr. *Balguy*, and therefore I ſit down to the examination of his late extraordinary charge. I confeſs indeed that I am not only concerned by Dr. *Balguy*'s miſrepreſentations: I am affected by certain principles

principles discovered in his *charge* which I consider as highly indecent and full of danger under a *Protestant* establishment. I conceive that not only the justice due to the petitioning clergy and laity, but the veneration in which that religion should be held which is contained in the BIBLE, and which I profess to be my religion, call me to the task and make it duty.

My design is to make these three things appear:

I. That Dr. *Balguy* has misrepresented the plea of the petitioners, and therefore that the ill consequences he has alledged will not follow upon their scheme.

II. That these ill consequences will follow upon the scheme he undertakes to defend.

III. That even the position he sets up in order to combat it as the position of the petitioners, namely, that government ought to employ and reward equally the ministers of all religions, will flow directly from the principles which the Arch-Deacon himself has laid down.

Dr. *Balguy* has divided his charge into two parts. In the first, he defends establishments in general; but with so direct a

view to the *petitioners* that he anticipates a great deal of what would more properly have been caſt into his ſecond part, where he diſcuſſes the arguments of the petitioners and examines their objections to the preſent mode of ſubſcription. This occaſions a repetition of the ſame topics in different parts of the charge, and if the Dr. be cloſely followed, an anſwer to him will labour under the ſame inconvenience. Perhaps then it will not be amiſs to give a ſummary of all which the Arch-Deacon has ſaid upon each topic both in his firſt and ſecond part.

I.

A Summary of Dr. *Balguy*'s Arguments *againſt the Petitioners*.

His deſign is profeſſedly to defend the eſtabliſhment of a national church, which it ſeems the petitioners wiſh to aboliſh, becauſe they will accept of nothing leſs than admiſſion into the miniſtry, and preferment in the church, without ſubſcription to any *human* formulary whatſoever [a]. It is not any particular eſtabliſhment he means to defend, but all eſtabliſhments—he means to defend not only Popery but Paganiſm itſelf: he means to defend every eſtabliſhment under heaven [b]. They who underſtand the nature of their own petition, he ſays, will readily

[a] Page 1. 2. [b] P. 7.

agree

agree that the queſtion amounts only to this, whether it be fit for government to employ and reward equally the miniſters of *all* religions, or to ſupport *one* religion only, and tolerate the reſt [c]. If the magiſtrate ſupports, without diſtinction, every form of religion, theſe three conſequences will be unavoidable, he muſt ſupport oppoſite religions, hurtful religions, religions ſubverſive of his own authority [d]. The conſequence of ſupporting oppoſite religions (even ſuppoſing every form of religion equally advantageous to the ſtate) would be univerſal irreligion; becauſe the bulk of mankind have not the uſe of their reaſon in religious matters [e]. But every religion is not equally advantageous to the ſtate, and it is an undoubted truth that the magiſtrate has a right to eſtabliſh ſuch doctrines as will beſt promote the peace and ſafety and happineſs of his own ſubjects [f]. And to what forms the preference is due, he only is the proper judge [g]. It can be no injuſtice then in the magiſtrate, to appoint thoſe only for public teachers whom he thinks qualified for that office. If he gives them a rule to direct their judgment, if this rule exclude from employment all who reject certain received opinions, he may be thought by ſome perhaps to act *unwiſely*, but there can be no pretence for ſaying he acts *injuriouſly* [h].

[c] P. 4: [d] P. 5. [e] Ibid. P. 9. [f] P. 15.
[h] P. 17.

Yet

Yet upon this ſcheme of univerſal ſupport, thoſe religions which are ſubverſive of private virtue, *viz.* Paganiſm and Mahometiſm, ought to be ſupported, and their teachers admitted into the public miniſtry, or the petitioners plea is inconſiſtent with itſelf. Or even allowing that they could, conſiſtently with their principles, juſtify themſelves in confining eccleſiaſtical preferments to the church of Chriſt, the argument remains in its full force; for it is ſcarce poſſible to name or invent an opinion more abſurd in itſelf, or more fatal to the cauſe of piety and virtue, than many of thoſe which have actually been maintained by men who called themſelves Chriſtians[i]. This is notoriouſly the caſe with the Papiſts, whom indeed the petitioners are willing to exclude; but it is not the caſe of them alone. The *Antinomians*, and, if they are not traduced, the *Moravians* alſo muſt be excluded, for the ſame reaſon that the petitioners exclude the Papiſts, viz. that their principles and practices would be injurious to ſociety[k]. And not only are ſome doctrines, called religious, ſubverſive of private virtue; even reformed religion, through the folly of ſome, and the knavery of others, has too often proved fatal to the power of the ſtate. Witneſs the ſects that diſgraced the glorious reformation, the *Anabaptiſts* in

[i] P. 9. 10. [k] P. 11. 12.

Germany

Germany, and the ſwarms of ſectaries which once overſpread this unhappy kingdom [l]. Yet all theſe held their opinions by the right of private judgment, and therefore have a right to eccleſiaſtical preferment; for it is not mere toleration, it is public promotion which is wanted [m]. Dr. *Balguy* is almoſt ready to give the petitioners leave to teach what they pleaſe, provided they would be content with the voluntary contributions of their hearers: but they inſiſt upon being rewarded for preaching, if they pleaſe, the moſt pernicious doctrines [n]. They inſiſt upon ſetting up an *imperium in imperio*, and, inſtead of ſubmitting to the magiſtrate, require the ſovereign to bow the knee to their ſpiritual deciſions [o]; while they give no adequate ſecurity, though they pretend it, either to church or ſtate, that they ſhall perform the duty of good citizens, or faithful paſtors of the flock committed to their charge [p].

This, I think, is the ſubſtance of the Archdeacon's charge, except a few anſwers to particular objections made by the petitioners, which ſhall be conſidered afterwards.

II.

Examination of Dr. *Balguy*'s State of the Queſtion. The Plea of the *Petitioners truly ſtated.*

[l] P. 11. 12. [m] P. 16. 17. [n] P. 17. [o] P. 14. 22. [p] P. 20. 23.

Dr.

Dr. *Balguy* aſſerts, that the ſcheme of the petitioners is to aboliſh the national church, becauſe they will accept of nothing leſs than admiſſion into the miniſtry, and preferment in the church, without ſubſcribing to any *human* formulary whatſoever.

But before this conſequence was drawn, it ſhould have been proved in oppoſition to fact, and probability, that no national church ever did or can exiſt without ſubſcription to a *human* formulary of religious faith and doctrine. Beſides, it is too vague an expreſſion concerning the petitioners, and by no means likely to convey their ſentiments fairly to the world, to ſay that they will not ſubſcribe to any *human formulary* whatſoever.

They will ſubſcribe, and very conſiſtently, to any human formulary which ſhall expreſs or imply their aſſent to the *ſcriptures*, and them only, to the total excluſion of all deciſions made by the ſpirit of men, fallible like themſelves, concerning the ſenſe of thoſe ſcriptures.

But as the Doctor undertakes to defend eſtabliſhments in *general*, and thoſe of all particular religions, not as ſtanding upon the aſſent of their reſpective members to the original code containing the religion, but the aſſent to certain propoſitions concerning that code, drawn up by men and enforced by the magiſtrate, he muſt, upon this idea, defend *human* formularies in general in oppoſition

to

to *divine*; and had the articles of the Church of England been written by the finger of God himſelf and delivered to the church at the reformation, it ſeems they muſt have been rejected, and held unfit to be a teſt of an eſtabliſhment, and the magiſtrate muſt have formed another of his own. This poſition, abſurd and ridiculous as it is, runs through the whole charge, and upon it ſeems to be built ſome of the wildeſt of thoſe accuſations which the angry Doctor has brought againſt his petitioning brethren. Such, in particular, is the charge againſt us, that we aim at the erection of a government within a government, and would ſubject the magiſtrate to our deciſions: in other words, becauſe the petitioners would have the magiſtrate's authority defined by juſtice and prudence, they are rebels.

Equally unfair is the Doctor's ſtate of the queſtion.

" They, ſays he, who underſtand the nature of their own petition beſt, will readily agree with me that the queſtion between us amounts only to this, whether it be fit for government to employ and reward equally the miniſters of *all* religions, or to ſupport one religion only and tolerate the reſt."

But this is not the queſtion, neither doth the prayer of the petitioners amount to any ſuch thing, as will preſently appear. In the mean time it may not be improper to remark a ſlight inaccuracy in our author's manner of

expreſſing the queſtion. It would have been more exactly worded thus: whether it be fit for government to employ and reward equally the *miniſters* of all religions, or to employ and reward equally the *miniſters* of one religion only, and tolerate the reſt. Or thus, whether it be fit for government to ſupport equally all *religions*, or to ſupport only one *religion* and tolerate the reſt. That theſe are very different things, and that to employ and reward the miniſters is not neceſſarily to ſupport the religion they profeſs, the world has had woeful experience from the days of *Conſtantine* to the æra of the reformation. But, waving this, the Arch-Deacon ſhould have introduced his ſtate of the queſtion with the reaſons for it, and not have taken it for granted that the intelligent petitioners deſire of government an equal ſupport of all religions. They prayed only for the ſupport of *one* religion, and ſo far were they from being enemies to an eſtabliſhment, that their petition ſuppoſes the lawfulneſs both of an eſtabliſhment and a teſt: it was therefore an unpardonable omiſſion of Dr. *Balguy* not to *demonſtrate* that upon the ſcheme of the petitioners all religions muſt be equally ſupported by the magiſtrate. This, though it has not been ſo much as attempted, has been peremptorily and briefly aſſerted, and might be as peremptorily and briefly denied, and even thus the greateſt part of the charge would be ſufficiently anſwered.

However,

However, in order to obviate any ſuſpicion that the plea of the petitioners may poſſibly lead to this doctrine of univerſal ſupport, I ſhall give a diſtinct view of it; by which means the impartial public will be enabled to judge of our Doctor's confidence in aſſertion.

The petition which was offered to the Houſe of Commons, reſpects only the proper regulation of the Chriſtian religion in doctrinal matters. It is true indeed that the very ſame principle upon which the requeſt of the petitioners was founded would juſtify a *Mahommedan* in petitioning that he might be called upon to ſubſcribe the *Coran* only, and none of its comments. But this is by no means a principle which has any tendency to eſtabliſh Mahommediſm or introduce it into this kingdom; on the contrary it muſt be ſuppoſed to be eſtabliſhed or introduced before any queſtion can ariſe concerning the mode of aſſenting to its doctrines.

The petitioners plead for themſelves thus, *when the ſtate permits* the profeſſion of a religion which is either revealed, or by its believers ſuppoſed to be revealed from heaven, the doctrines of which have by the founder or founders of ſuch religion been committed to writing in order to ſerve as a guide of faith and practice, let that code of doctrine be reckoned the only teſt by which a man's ſoundneſs in the faith of that religion ſhall be tried.

Thus we ſee that *eſtabliſhments* have but little to do in the preſent controverſy, for

this plea will hold equally good whether it be fit that government ſhould ſupport equally all religions (permitted in the ſtate) or only one religion.

Suppoſe that the magiſtrate has a right to chooſe out of the various religions which have a footing in the ſtate, one, which he will eſtabliſh in preference to the reſt, the only queſtion is whether he ought to adopt the *doctrines* of that as they came from the hands of the inſtitutor, or to modify them according to his pleaſure, and thus, if it ſo happen, make a new religion of his own.

From this view it appears that the Arch-Deacon has either totally miſtaken, or artfully miſrepreſented the queſtion in diſpute; and has cauſed by this means one of the moſt ſimple and modeſt requeſts which could have been made to government (a requeſt more ſimple and modeſt than if it had been made for the abolition or even the alteration of a ſingle article) to appear big with the moſt abſurd and dangerous conſequences.

But if Dr. *Balguy* was really alarmed at what he took for the ſenſe of the petitioners, and has not all this while been laughing at the terror he may have raiſed in certain minds of feeble texture, he muſt have been ſurpriſed into this *panic* by certain general expreſſions concerning the rights of private judgment, which have been uſed by the *petitioners* or their friends in defence of their plan,

plan, and againſt the preſent mode of ſubſcription. It will therefore be proper in the next place to conſider that argument at ſome length, and ſet it in as clear and unequivocal a light as poſſible.

III.

The plea of private judgment conſidered.—How it is infringed by the preſent mode of ſubſcription.—It does not countenance the doctrine of univerſal ſupport.

That we may underſtand how far the petitioners are right in objecting to the preſent mode of ſubſcription as an infringement of the rights of private judgment, it will be neceſſary to conſider theſe rights, and the extent of the magiſtrates cognizance of their exertion.

Private judgment is nothing elſe than the rational conviction of a man's own mind concerning the truth or falſhood of any propoſition, or of the lawfulneſs or unlawfulneſs of any practice enjoined him, or that ſuch or ſuch is the meaning of the words in which any propoſition is expreſſed. In all theſe the mind is entirely paſſive: for no man can believe that to be true or falſe which he is not convinced of by ſome argument, good or bad: and no man can, with ſincerity, affix any other meaning to a ſet of words than that which they ſeem to him to convey. Yet the opinions of men may juſtly

fall

fall under the cognizance of the magiſtrate; and there are maxims, the maintenance of which will juſtify expulſion from a ſociety, or incapacity for promotion to certain offices in that ſociety, becauſe they render ſuch as hold them incapable of performing the duties of good citizens, or of ſerving the ſtate in ſome particular department. And here, no unwarrantable infringement is made upon the rights of private judgment.

Thus, if a man ſhould hold it to be the duty of parents to propitiate the Deity with the blood of their children, he ought to be expelled from every well regulated ſociety. Should a man who holds the unlawfulneſs of war ſolicit the command of a regiment, a knowledge of his tenets would be a ſufficient reaſon for debarring him from that promotion.

But if the tenets of the individual do no way affect the well being of the community; if they be perfectly conſiſtent with the duties which he owes to ſociety, and with the faithful diſcharge of the office which he ſolicits, then to exclude him from promotion becauſe of his opinions, is an unwarrantable infringement of the rights of private judgment; and ſuch procedure of any community muſt be tyrannical and unjuſt.

Thus far, it is hoped, both parties will agree in opinion. Let us then examine in what manner the right of private judgment is infringed by the preſent mode of ſubſcription.

The

The petition was in favour of *laymen* as well as *clergymen*, who equally complained that the right of private judgment was invaded, by making ſubſcription to the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of the Church of England, neceſſary to their promotion in their reſpective departments. But the layman did not ſolicit preferment in clerical offices, nor the clergyman promotion to ſecular employments: and therefore the difference of their pleas ſhould be attended to.

The layman may plead thus:—I deſire only to be held capable of *ſecular* employments—I hold no opinions which can, in equity, be conſidered as rendering me unfit for a place of truſt in the community, and of this I am ready to give all reaſonable ſecurity, even the very ſame ſecurity which is given by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, to enable them to ſit and vote in all the determinations of legiſlature: with my other opinions the ſtate has nothing to do.—I cannot change them at will, and ſo long as they affect not the ſtate, while they reſpect only God and my own conſcience, to deprive me of any privileges which a citizen ought to enjoy, of which a capacity of being promoted in a way that has nothing to do with theſe opinions is one, is an unwarrantable infringement of my right of private judgment.

It is evident that this plea which may be urged by the layman, whether he be of the

religion

religion which is ſupported, or only tolerated by the magiſtrate, is more general than that of the clergyman who pleads for promotion in that particular church which the magiſtrate ſupports. I plead, ſays the clergyman, for a capacity of promotion in a particular church, and I am ready to teſtify my aſſent to, and belief of all the doctrines of that church, as they have been delivered by the founder of the religion which that church profeſſes. The ſenſe of the propoſitions, as laid down in the code of doctrine left us by the founder of the religion, I can have in no other way than by the light of my private judgment. I cannot, therefore, bind myſelf down to underſtand them in any other ſenſe than that which the words appear to me now, or ſhall hereafter appear to me, upon more mature examination, really to convey. And to require of me a ſolemn promiſe to interpret them in any other way than as my private judgment doth now or hereafter may dictate to me, is an unwarrantable impoſition on the part of the ſtate, and ſhould be oppoſed on mine.

Although this latter plea be only put in the mouth of a clergyman, it is plain that it may be equally uſed by any layman profeſſing the religion eſtabliſhed by the magiſtrate as an additional reaſon for his being capable of promotion in ſecular offices, without any ſuch ſubſcription as our preſent to human formularies of religious faith and doctrine.

But

But it is very unfair to put into the mouth of a clergyman pleading for preferment in a particular church, a plea which would only become a layman pleading for preferment in offices where religion is not at all concerned. Yet this art has been uſed by the oppoſers of the petition from the beginning of the controverſy; and hence the cry that *Pagans*, *Mahommetans*, and every abomination was to be let into the *Church*; that all religions were to be equally countenanced by the magiſtrate, and their miniſters and profeſſors employed and rewarded, though they ſhould inculcate doctrines and practices entirely deſtructive of civil government.

The argument of the petitioners from the rights of private judgment will be clearer ſtill, if we apply it more particularly to the mode of our eſtabliſhment.

It cannot be denied that the ſcriptures are in this kingdom eſtabliſhed as the rule of faith and practice to all the inhabitants; and that the doctrines of the Church of England ought to be the doctrines of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, as delivered in the ſcriptures, and no other. But theſe doctrines, as laid down in the ſcriptures, are held out to the private judgment of every individual to be by him taken in the ſenſe which the words ſeem to him to convey; becauſe it is impoſſible for any man to take them in any other ſenſe. All Chriſtians have therefore from Chriſt and his

apoſtles this liberty, a liberty which is proper, juſt and equitable, or it would never have been granted, and *as Chriſtians* are bound to conſider the taking of this liberty away, and the ſhifting of the object of their private judgment from the words of ſcripture to the words of the articles as a grievous impoſition.

And it is impoſſible to argue for this impoſition, as Dr. *Balguy* has done, without oppoſing, I will not ſay the eſtabliſhment, but even the *toleration* of Chriſtianity in any country. For if the ſcriptures be the only authentic record of the doctrines of Chriſtianity, and they either contain or do not diſcountenance tenets deſtructive of the peace and well-being of ſociety; if ſincere and conſcientious enquirers into their meaning ſhall not be ſecured from falling into practices directly ſubverſive of good order and government; then is the uſe of the ſcriptures to be prohibited in every well regulated ſociety, and the religion they contain, inſtead of being honoured by an eſtabliſhment, to be refuſed a toleration.

But, as things ſtand at preſent, we have two rules, both of which are to be interpreted by private judgment, and interpreted in a perfect conſiſtency with one another. One of them we are bound as Chriſtians to conſider as a compleat revelation of the will of God to man, we are bound to ſtudy and find out its meaning; we are bound to believe

lieve and act in no other way than we ſhall be convinced it dictates to us, after having exerted our beſt abilities in the enquiry; and the magiſtrate enforces this obligation by publiſhing the ſcriptures and putting them into the hands of the people, profeſſedly as the rule of their faith and practice.

But, at the ſame time another rule is publiſhed by the magiſtrate's authority, and many excellent citizens are rendered incapable of preferment in civil or eccleſiaſtical offices, if they do not ſolemnly declare their belief of all the doctrines contained in this latter rule, and that it is in all reſpects agreeable to the former, and thus engage to defend and maintain the doctrines contained in both as equally true, and agreeable to each other. And now let me aſk any unprejudiced man whether he will chooſe to call this a flagrant violation of the rights of private judgment, or a cruel inſult upon common ſenſe? It may be remarked as an additional abſurdity and injuſtice in the caſe of thoſe ſubſcribers whoſe employment leads to a ſtrict examination of the ſcriptures, that the terms of their aſſent to theſe ſacred writings at the time of ordination implies that they may go on to increaſe in ſacred knowledge, and by this means find occaſion to doubt of that ſtrict conformity between the Bible and the articles which they once believed to exiſt; and that even in ſuch a caſe their ſubſcription is ſuppoſed to bind

them to an implicit reliance upon the human and not the divine guide, or to an open renunciation of their miniſtry *.

If it be urged that a belief of the ſcriptures qualifies a man for being a member of the church of Chriſt, but that a belief of the doctrines of Chriſtianity as laid down in the articles and homilies can only qualify him for being a member or teacher of the Church of England; it may be anſwered that this argument would be concluſive were the Church of England fairly and publicly to declare that the ſcriptures are a leſs perfect and ſufficient code of doctrine than her articles, and by ſuch a declaration clearly diſtinguiſh between the two churches: But ſo long as ſhe inſiſts upon her members making what ſhall appear to them the true ſenſe of

* See the office of ordaining of prieſts. The Biſhop aſks the candidate, after he has ſubſcribed the articles, "Will you be diligent in prayers, and in reading of the holy ſcriptures, and in ſuch ſtudies as help to the knowledge of the ſame, laying aſide the ſtudy of the world and the fleſh?" To which the candidate anſwers "I will endeavour myſelf ſo to do, the Lord being my helper."

But, ſurely the proper anſwer to ſuch a queſtion ſhould be, No: I have already ſubſcribed the articles as all and every one of them agreeable to the word of God, of which I am, of courſe, ſuppoſed a competent judge: I have engaged to miniſter the word of God by the articles as a rule; my attention muſt therefore be engaged upon them and not the ſcriptures; the rather as I muſt wound my conſcience or ruin my affairs ſhould I meddle any further with the ſcriptures and think them at variance in *any* one point with the articles.

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ſcripture, and at the ſame time what appears the ſenſe of them to any particular ſet of men now living, or has appeared to a particular ſet of men who lived in a former age, the rule of their belief and conduct ſhe acts unwiſely and abſurdly, and therefore unjuſtly. For none can without manifeſt injury exerciſe authority over another in an unwiſe and abſurd manner.

It was neceſſary to conſider this argument at ſome length as the ſubject is ſomewhat intricate, and has either accidentally or ſtudiouſly been much obſcured. However, it appears upon the whole that the plea of the petitioners for the inviolableneſs of the right of private judgment, will by no means juſtify the Archdeacon's aſſertion, that the queſtion between him and them, is, whether it be fit for government to ſupport all religions, and therefore the whole that he has ſaid in the firſt part of his charge falls to the ground at once.

IV.

Whether the petitioners plan tends to eſtabliſh oppoſite religions—hurtful religions—religions ſubverſive of the magiſtrate's authority.

From what hath been ſaid in the foregoing ſections, it appears that upon the ſcheme of the petitioners ſome men may be excluded from preferment in eccleſiaſtical or

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even civil offices upon account of their opinions, and that their principles do not tend to aboliſh all teſts whatſoever.

The remaining part of the controverſy therefore can only reſpect the ſufficiency of the teſt propoſed by the petitioners.—— Their plea we have already ſeen; unleſs then it be proved that the ſcriptures expreſly and plainly countenance oppoſite religions, hurtful religions, and religions ſubverſive of the magiſtrate's authority, a ſolemn engagement entered into by the miniſters of Chriſtianity, that they ſhall teach nothing to the people as matter of faith, but what they find expreſly and plainly countenanced by ſcripture muſt be an engagement that they will neither introduce into the church oppoſite religions, hurtful religions, nor religions ſubverſive of the magiſtrate's authority. And what Proteſtant, what Chriſtian will ſay that the ſcriptures expreſly and plainly countenance ſuch? Who but muſt ſay that they plainly and expreſly condemn them?—If they did not, they muſt be totally unfit for a rule either of faith or practice, or to be put into the hands of the people to be read and ſtudied by them as ſuch.

The Papiſts indeed are conſiſtent, upon this head, they are of opinion that the ſcriptures are very dangerous books, they are ſenſible that whoever reads them muſt take their true meaning to be what the words he reads, upon a careful examination, convey

vey to his underſtanding. They therefore lock them up from the vulgar, leſt from reading them they ſhould fall into dangerous hereſies. But among us, the magiſtrate holds them out to all men to be read and ſtudied, enjoins every man to examine them for himſelf, even as was done by Chriſt and his apoſtles; and declares that they are to look upon no doctrine as warrantable and true, which they cannot really find there; condemns implicit faith, or blindly taking, upon the word of another, any thing for ſcripture-doctrine which they are not convinced in their own minds is really contained in and perfectly agreeable to the ſcriptures; and yet at the ſame time moſt inconſiſtently holds that this may very probably be a means of propagating among his ſubjects hurtful religions, and religions ſubverſive of his own authority. Either then the magiſtrate ſhould entirely take the ſcriptures out of the hands of the people, or he muſt own that they cannot give the leaſt countenance to ſuch pernicious doctrines.—But this will merit a more particular diſcuſſion.

V.

Of oppoſite religions—What is meant by them—whether diverſity of opinion be productive of atheiſm?

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The Archdeacon has inſiſted, at great length, upon the ill effects that would flow from the magiſtrate's ſupporting of oppoſite religions; but it does not appear, from the charge, what is meant by this term, nor is it very eaſy to ſettle it. Different religions are not always oppoſite religions.—The religion of nature, for inſtance, and the Chriſtian are different, but not oppoſite religions. The Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations were likewiſe different, but not oppoſite, becauſe the one was compleated by the other: but the religion of *Chriſt* is not only different from, but oppoſite to the religion of *Mahomet*, or of *Zoroaſter*.—We will ſuppoſe, then, that oppoſite religions are ſuch as propoſe different and inconſiſtent objects of worſhip, enjoin oppoſite duties and obſervances, by the performance of which the favour of the Being to be worſhipped is ſecured; and which ſet before us oppoſite motives to excite us to the practice of thoſe duties.—But inculcating the worſhip of the ſame being, the practice of the ſame duties, proving the neceſſity and reaſonableneſs of them by arguments drawn from different, or even oppoſite principles, will not always make oppoſite religions. A certain apologiſt for the Church of England has put a caſe in which he ſuppoſes a ſociety of men, left to themſelves, without any guidance but the light of nature, to unite together and form a creed or ſyſtem of religious doctrines, which

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their public teachers ſhould inculcate and inforce. Let us imagine one of the articles of this Creed to be, that there is only one God, or that only one God is to be worſhipped, and that, in proving this truth from the uniformity of deſign apparent in the ſtructure and mechaniſm of the univerſe, one teacher ſhould explain it on the principles of *Deſcartes*, another on thoſe of *Newton*: would they, for that reaſon, teach oppoſite religions? No, they only take oppoſite roads to meet in the ſame point, and the convinced hearers of each, would, ſo far as religion is concerned, agree perfectly in opinion, that there is but one God, or that only one God is to be worſhipped. Juſt ſo would it happen in controverſies ariſing among judicious and ſober men who ſhould take the ſcriptures for their only rule in matters of faith. As men, they muſt differ in ſome opinions: but that this difference ſhould amount to the maintenance of oppoſite religions is totally inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition that Chriſtianity, be it what it will, is a *revealed* religion, and ſtands now recorded in an intelligible language. For the great truths of Chriſtianity and the duties reſulting from them are I may venture to affirm, as clearly expreſſed in the ſcriptures as they can be in any human compoſition. But with regard to the abſtruſe principles from which the Chriſtian doctrines may be deduced, the wiſdom of God has not thought fit to be particular. Indeed they

have nothing more to do with the eſſence of *revealed* religion, than the ſyſtems of vortices and attraction have to do with *natural*. For whether the world was created, and man redeemed in one way or another; whether the Deity, in the work of creation, made uſe of intermediate agents, mechanical or moral, or not; and whether, in the work of redemption, he made uſe of an intermediate agent of a divine, angelic, or human nature; ſtill the great truths, upon which alone depend the relations we ſtand in to our Creator and Redeemer are inconteſtible, and the religion is the ſame.

Thus much it was thought proper to obſerve, in order to clear the petitioners from the imputation of endeavouring to introduce into the eſtabliſhment oppoſite religions.

Let us now ſee what the Archdeacon ſays would be the conſequence, ſhould the magiſtrate ſupport oppoſite religions: according to him the conſequence would be, in one word, univerſal irreligion.—And how is this proved? He denies, to the bulk of mankind, the uſe of reaſon on religious ſubjects, "becauſe they cannot uſe it, becauſe "many of them want capacity, moſt of them "opportunity to think for themſelves."—It would be impertinent to diſpute the Archdeacon's experience in this matter, he is the beſt judge of the capacity of his flock; all that can be ſaid is, that if he has, without any good effect, earneſtly laboured to inſtil into their minds a belief of the great truths

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of Chriſtianity, upon rational grounds; to enforce upon their conſciences the duties it enjoins, by ſhewing their obligations to the practice of them from reaſon and ſcripture, his ill ſucceſs is greatly to be lamented.—He ſays that they muſt take their religion upon the word of their parents, teachers, and governors. But with the Archdeacon's good leave, there have been times when the preachers of Chriſtianity, unſupported by any human authority, by the mere dint of perſuaſion, argument and proof, convinced their hearers of its truth, even in oppoſition to all the prejudices of their education, and the principles inſtilled into them by their parents, teachers and governors. But theſe preachers are aſcended into heaven, and it ſeems, if the Archdeacon is to be believed, they have not left even a ſhred of their mantle behind them. However, to drop theſe reflections, one thing I think may ſafely be aſſerted, that a belief of any religious tenets, on the ground he propoſes, will avail but very little. God requires of us a reaſonable ſervice, and we are exhorted in ſcripture to be always ready to give a defence of the hope that is in us, we are commanded to try all things and hold faſt that which is beſt, and theſe precepts are addreſſed to the whole body of Chriſtians. St. Paul thought the common people, in his days, able to feel the force of reaſoning, and therefore uſed it, both in his diſcourſes and epiſtles, which were not calculated for the wiſe and learned

only, but alſo for the vulgar. The other apoſtles uſed it: our Lord himſelf uſed it.— If the people have not the uſe of their reaſon in religious matters, what boots it to pretend to reaſon with them, or to prove to them the truth of any doctrine whatever, its conſiſtency with reaſon or with ſcripture? Why is it not inculcated upon this ſole ground? We teach by direction of the magiſtrate, and thus muſt ye believe, becauſe he ſays ſo.

All this while the good Proteſtant Arch-Deacon would not be thought to prefer implicit faith to rational conviction. No, for there is no room for preference upon his principles: the people are under an invincible neceſſity of implicitly believing. But ſuppoſing a preference poſſible, how he can exculpate himſelf from the charge of preferring implicit belief to rational conviction with regard to the bulk of mankind, does not appear. He certainly prefers implicit belief to an attempt to convince them of the truth of their religion, or the obligation of the duties it enjoins. And this becauſe the bulk of mankind want capacity. It is pity that the Arch-Deacon has been ſo confined by his plan to *generals*, as not to aſcertain what meaſure of capacity a man ought to be poſſeſſed of, before he ſhould preſume to lay claim to this privilege of having the reaſons for the truth of his religion laid before him, and the doctrines his teachers inſtruct him in proved to be agreeable to that religion.

gion. Perhaps the ſingle circumſtance of not being convinced of the validity of the reaſons urged in defence of an eſtabliſhed doctrine, would with the Doctor be a ſufficient mark of incapacity, by which compendious rule every refractory layman may be turned into the herd of implicit believers.

The Archdeacon indeed propoſes that the preſs ſhould be left open for an accurate diſcuſſion of conteſted points, but ſays, "let "not the pulpit be made a ſtage of religious "controverſy: let not good men, who "come together to receive religious in-"ſtruction, be perplexed and diſquieted "with the doubts, and cavils, and endleſs "contradictions of religious diſputants: "and above all let them not be exaſperated "againſt each other, as may well be ex-"pected in ſuch diſputes by that moſt ma-"lignant among human paſſions, zeal with-"out knowledge."

But by this ſcheme, to borrow a phraſe from himſelf, "the difficulty is ſhifted only not removed." For if every man may write, many will who are not orthodox; and if all may read many more will peruſe thoſe controverſies than the Archdeacon will allow to be capable of judging: and an heretical book, in the hands of an unlearned layman, may do him as much miſchief as an heretical ſermon delivered to him from the pulpit. To render the ſcheme compleat, then, religious controverſy ought to be baniſhed

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not only from the the pulpit but the preſs: for in vain can we hope that its ill effects on the people will be prevented, while that is left open, though the pulpit be ſhut againſt it.

But in truth the ſpeedieſt way to put an end to controverſies is to allow freedom of debate on both ſides, and, where it was poſſible for truth to be come at, there was never an inſtance of this method failing. It need not be obſerved that, in the preſent mode of eſtabliſhment, religious controverſy from the pulpit is even injoined, and indeed muſt be injoined, ſo long as human articles are made the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics of any church, and it is preſcribed as a duty incumbent upon the miniſters of that church to defend them as agreeable to ſcripture and to truth. For in this caſe the objections alledged againſt them by other churches muſt be brought into view, the arguments of their opponents fairly ſtated, in order to a ſolid refutation, and, if they be ſpecious and weighty, they may be attended with as fatal conſequences to the eſtabliſhment, in the minds of ſome of the hearers, as if the queſtion had been debated *pro* and *con* by different preachers.

That preaching the doctrines of any particular church upon the ſingle ground of human authority, (for that is the only thing aimed at by the Archdeacon) ſhould, as Dr. *Balguy* would make us believe, prevent the

the ill effects of zeal without knowledge, has very much the air of a paradox to ſay no worſe of it.—It is rather to be apprehended that the very reverſe would happen. Knowledge the people could have none. And if they hear the ſame ſet of doctrines continually repeated, held forth as of the greateſt importance, and thoſe who diſſent from them branded with the names of heretics, ſchiſmatics and ſectaries; if they ſee them thruſt out of the church, excluded from the communion of true orthodox Chriſtians, and an opprobrious mark of diſtinction fixed upon them by the ſtate, zeal muſt be inflamed and woe to them that feel the effects of it.

But even ſuppoſing the incapacity of the people ever ſo great, this uniformity is not the way for them to be inſtructed. Of this we have a lamentable proof in the Romiſh church, as well as that implicit faith is no cooler of zeal. What was the conſequence of that church adopting this maxim? Groſs palpable ignorance, both of the doctrines and duties of Chriſtianity, overſpread at once the clergy and laity. We have very near a thouſand years experience to oppoſe to the Arch-Deacon's theory, and that not in one or two nations only, but through the whole of Europe.

If religious controverſy will naturally produce atheiſm in the minds of the people, as the Arch-Deacon ſays it will, our reformers certainly

certainly acted a very imprudent, not to ſay a very wicked part, for they laboured ſo inceſſantly in religious controverſy, both from the pulpit and the preſs, in public and in private, that it was next to a miracle we were not all atheiſts before the death of *Edward* the Sixth. But, to be ſerious, perhaps we may venture to aſſert that even the ſupport of oppoſite religions will not be productive of atheiſm, and experience will evince it. Where oppoſite religions prevail, the grounds of each religion are canvaſſed, and that unavoidably turns the thoughts of men to an examination of the general principle on which religion of every kind is founded, namely the being and attributes of God, which muſt end in a full conviction of its truth.

But where the people are required to give an implicit aſſent to certain doctrines propounded to them by the magiſtrate, there atheiſm is likely to prevail. The mind of man is not of the caſt to take things ſo much upon truſt as ſeems to be imagined: men are by nature prone to attempt an examination of the truth of what is propoſed to them, and if they can find no reaſon for it, a very ſlight one will turn the balance on the other ſide. If then the religious tenets, inculcated upon the people, be not properly defended, ſhewn to be reaſonable and true, and they have no other to adopt they will caſt aſide all religion. Experience

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the ſureſt guide in theſe matters confirms this theory: there is no country where atheiſm has prevailed, or continues to prevail more than in Italy. But all this reaſoning has been anſwered long before; indeed it is extraordinary in the mouth of a Proteſtant divine, however it may become the man who openly declares he would defend paganiſm if it happened to be the eſtabliſhed religion.

VI.

Whether the ſcheme of the petitioners would introduce into the church hurtful religions, and religions ſubverſive of the magiſtrate's authority?—Of the independency of the church upon the ſtate.

What has been already ſaid, will perhaps, be thought ſufficient to vindicate the petitioners from the charge of introducing into the church oppoſite religions, with all the conſequences mentioned by the Arch-Deacon. Equally free are they from the two others of endeavouring to introduce hurtful religions, and religions ſubverſive of the magiſtrate's authority. The Arch-Deacon indeed endeavours to fix this charge upon them; but how? Not by ſhewing that the ſcriptures countenance ſuch doctrines, as ought to have been done before any body of men could be charged with ſuch a deſign

conſequence of endeavouring to make the ſcriptures the only teſt of right faith: he only ſays that many, who have *called themſelves Chriſtians*, have held ſuch doctrines. But did theſe *nominal Chriſtians* adopt the ſcriptures for their only rule, had they no other director of their faith and practice? Alas! it is a melancholy truth that they choſe for themſelves other guides. They *forgot the rock from which they were hewen, and hewed out unto themſelves broken ciſterns.* The Papiſts truſted to tradition and the deciſions of the church. Thoſe ſects that diſgraced the glorious reformation, the Anabaptiſts, the Antinomians, and afterwards the Quakers, had their private revelations, they dreamed dreams and ſaw viſions, they were favoured with illuminations and ſuggeſtions of the holy ſpirit, by which they maintained an immediate intercourſe with heaven, and in compariſon with which the dead letter of the ſcriptures ſignified nothing. I have too much reſpect for the articles to recriminate, and charge upon them all the wild notions that have been held by the wildeſt enthuſiaſts, who have called themſelves members of the Church of England, and pretended that their doctrines were hers. I ſhall not even ſay any thing of the Methodiſts, though they loudly declare themſelves her genuine ſons, and aſſert that they alone underſtand her articles in the true ſenſe.—The Arch-Deacon would ſoon ſhew the weakneſs, the

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futility of ſuch a charge. He would anſwer that no teſt can poſſibly be contrived, the meaning of which may not be miſtaken by men ſo loſt to common ſenſe as to deny the firſt principles of morality, or ſo mad as to fancy themſelves inſpired. To them all teſts are nothing: before the breath of inſpiration every obſtacle will fly like chaff before the wind. Before any ſuch objection then can be alledged againſt the petitioners, it muſt be ſhewn that the pernicious doctrines held by the peſts of ſociety, the Arch-Deacon has given us ſo copious a liſt of, are not flatly contradicted by the whole tenor of the ſcriptures: it will even be neceſſary to point out theſe doctrines *totidem terminis* in the ſacred text.

Let it not be ſaid that the Arch-Deacon defends eſtabliſhments in general, and not the particular articles of the Church of England. —The whole of his charge is an attack upon that particular mode of eſtabliſhment which the petitioners have propoſed, or it is nothing to the purpoſe.—If his ſcheme be to defend eſtabliſhments in general, why does he attack that particular teſt, (I mean the ſcripture) which the petitioners pray the legiſlature may be eſtabliſhed, in his ſenſe of the word, that is upon an unfeigned aſſent to which all teachers to be appointed and rewarded by the magiſtrate, may be held ſufficiently ſound in the Chriſtian faith. Why does he attempt to depreciate them,

and to draw an invidious parallel between them and Cranmer's articles?—Compariſons are odious; but indeed it is become faſhionable among thoſe, who would be thought orthodox members of the Church of England, to ſpeak of the ſcriptures in the moſt contemptuous terms, though it might have been hoped, after the indecency of it had been ſo fully ſhewn as it has been, that ſhameful practice would have been laid aſide.

Theſe defenders of the church, as they love to ſtile themſelves, would do well to conſider that, when they aſk with triumph, what is ſcripture? They lay themſelves open both to Papiſts and Infidels. If it cannot be anſwered what is ſcripture, neither can it be anſwered what is Chriſtianity, for Chriſtianity can be had only from ſcripture; and if learning, abilities, ſincerity, and careful examination will not be ſufficient to guard men againſt miſtaking the ſcripture in points affecting the very eſſence of Chriſtianity, our religion is entirely vague and undetermined. The Archdeacon, in one part of his charge, has ſaid that ſubſcription to the ſcripture is abſolutely nothing: but if ſo, the ſcriptures themſelves muſt be abſolutely nothing, and all belief founded upon them muſt be founded upon nothing.—Thus do theſe men, in order to defend their beloved articles, plunge a dagger into the vitals of Proteſtantiſm, of Chriſtianity itſelf, at the very time that they

pretend

pretend to defend them againſt the open violence of their profeſſed enemies, or the inſidious attacks of their pretended friends. The truth is, that the arguments they alledge againſt the ſcriptures, as a teſt of orthodoxy, militate directly againſt their being a rule of faith and practice, though, when preſſed upon this head, they fly off, and ſay that the ſenſe of them may poſſibly be miſtaken or miſrepreſented by ignorance or knavery. But ſubſcription to any ſet of doctrines neither proves a man's knowledge nor honeſty, both of them are ſuppoſed, and it is to be preſumed that the perſon who is admitted to ſubſcribe has given proofs of them.—And, what teſt can be contrived that men can underſtand if they have not common ſenſe, or will not diſtort and explain away, if they want common honeſty? It ſeems to be an odd kind of miſtake which the advocates for ſubſcription, in the preſent mode, run into, viz. that, upon the petitioners plan, if men ſubſcribe to the ſcripture, they are then left entirely at liberty to preach any doctrine that they ſhall think proper, though expreſsly contrary to the ſcripture; but nothing can be more ridiculous than this is.—It might be juſt as reaſonably alledged, that, becauſe they who ſubſcribe to the articles of the Church of England, are left to interpret them by their private judgment, they are therefore at liberty to preach any doctrines they think proper, though directly contrary

trary to the articles, which is a manifeſt abſurdity. By the ſtatute 1 Eliz. that is made hereſy which is contrary to the expreſs words of ſcripture, which is condemned by the four firſt general councils, or any one of them, or what the parliament with the aſſent of the clergy aſſembled in convocation may hereafter, from the expreſs words of ſcripture, declare to be hereſy. Now the petitioners only requeſt that nothing may be declared to be hereſy which is not contrary to the plain and expreſs words of ſcripture. And however wrangling metaphyſicians may cavil about what ſhall be held plain and expreſs words, men of ſenſe and candour will never by any ſophiſtry be brought to believe that plain and expreſs words, and dark and ambiguous words are not diſtinguiſhable from one another. It is indeed ſurpriſing to ſee the various ſhifts the oppoſers of the petition are put to. Sometimes pointing againſt it the artillery of the Vatican, ſometimes taking up with the low exploded quibbles of Deiſts and Sceptics, and ſapping not only the fundamental principles of Chriſtianity, but even of all knowledge and certainty whatſoever, in order to raiſe a duſt and throw a cloud over the plaineſt dictates of common ſenſe.

But enough of this, let us return to the charge. Among the various inſtances of hurtful tenets which the Archdeacon has ſaid would, by the ſcheme of the petitioners, be introduced into or not kept out of the eſta-

eſtabliſhment, that of the independency of the church upon the ſtate is one, which it is of the more importance to conſider, as, in the Archdeacon's charge, it ſeems to be inſinuated, that the aim of the petitioners is to aſſert this independency.

But let us hear the Archdeacon himſelf, p. 14. he ſays—" I muſt not omit to take " notice of one general principle, which has " too often inſinuated itſelf into the minds " of Proteſtants as well as Papiſts; and " which is abſolutely deſtructive of the " peace of ſociety. The principle I mean " is that of the independence of the church " upon the ſtate. Every one knows the pre- " valence of this tenet in the Church of Rome, " the wars, the murders, the miſeries it has " produced, for a ſucceſſion of ages. If " then there be Proteſtants (under whatever " denomination) who maintain the ſame " doctrine; it highly concerns the magiſ- " trate to be upon his guard againſt them, " to uſe all poſſible means of excluding them " from every office of truſt whether in " church or ſtate." And p. 21 and 22, again reſuming this ſubject, he ſays, ſpeaking of the oaths of ſupremacy and allegiance. —" Will they even be ſufficient to exclude " from our churches the men who would " ſet up an eccleſiaſtical kingdom in the " midſt of the civil, and require the ſove- " reign, in return for the allegiance they " pay him, to bend the knee to their ſpiri- " tual deciſions? The doctrines and the

" may

" men here intended are called, perhaps,
" Proteſtants, not Popiſh. But in this caſe
" I make no diſtinction. Whether it be
" Pope or Council, Biſhops or Preſbyters:
" whether it be the pride of philoſophy, or
" the folly of ſuperſtition, or the madneſs
" of enthuſiaſm: whoever or whatever it
" be that rivals the authority of the magiſ-
" trate, may and muſt be reſtrained from
" doing public miſchief."

Now in the name of common ſenſe to what does this piece of furious declamation tend, or what does the Arch-Deacon mean by the independency of the church upon the ſtate? If it be the Popiſh independency, viz. the independency of churchmen upon the ſtate, that they are not accountable to the ſtate nor amenable to her tribunal for any crime which they may be guilty of, the ſcripture itſelf has flatly contradicted ſuch independency, in the moſt clear and expreſs manner; and that the oaths of allegiance and ſupremacy, poſitively declare againſt ſuch independency, no man can be ſo totally void of common ſenſe as to deny, ſcarce even that Proteſtant divine who ſhould affirm the poſitive and expreſs doctrines of ſcripture conſiſtent with every imaginable abſurdity and miſchief.

If by the independency of the church be meant that churchmen may model at their pleaſure the doctrines of Chriſtianity and impoſe them upon the ſtate, the whole plan of the petitioners is abſolutely againſt it, becauſe upon

upon their ſcheme no ſet of men whatever have power to determine a ſingle Iota in doctrinal matters different from the plain and expreſs words of ſcripture; and if their plan be adopted all who hold ſuch an opinion, muſt be excluded from the church even without either the oath of ſupremacy or allegiance.

However, I am afraid many who call themſelves orthodox members of the Church of England, and who are certainly very zealous defenders of human articles will give the Arch-Deacon but little thanks for his declaration. What would have been the conſequence of his making it in the age of Jewel and Hooker which, he ſays, will be reverenced by the lateſt poſtery?—How would he have been anathematized as a peſtilent heretic by the pious Arch-Biſhop Laud? I know the Arch-Deacon defends eſtabliſhments in general, and that he therefore excuſes himſelf from anſwering any charge that may be brought againſt the particular mode of our eſtabliſhment, yet, I ſhould be glad to know why he thus expoſes its nakedneſs to its enemies, while he aims a blow at the petitioners that cannot poſſibly hurt them. Hear Hooker, whoſe very name, it ſeems will make the age he lived in be reverenced by the lateſt poſterity. "God's clergy, ſays he, (p. 154) are a ſtate "which hath been, and will be, as long as "there is a church upon earth, neceſſarily

" by the plain word of God himſelf, a ſtate " whereunto the *reſt of God's people* muſt " be ſubject as to things pertaining to their " ſouls health."—And now let me aſk, is this maintaining the independency of the church upon the ſtate or not? The clergy he ſays are a ſtate, and a ſtate upon earth, and a ſtate to which all the reſt of God's people and conſequently the magiſtrate himſelf (if he be one of God's people) muſt be *ſubject* as to things pertaining to their ſouls health: to put it in the Arch-Deacon's own words, he muſt bow the knee to their ſpiritual deciſions. According to Dr. *Balguy* then, Hooker himſelf, the great Hooker, on whoſe buſt the Church of England ought to inſcribe DECUS ET TUTAMEN, deſerved, for his ſentiments on *eccleſiaſtical polity*, to have been excluded from every office of truſt both in church and ſtate.—I will not affront the church, nor ſhock the Arch-Deacon with a recital of the wild ravings of Laud, Hickes, Heylin and Dodwel, on the ſame ſubject. I will agree with him that ſuch men as they were utterly unfit for any office either in church or ſtate, and yet, it ſeems, ſo defective is our eſtabliſhment, that they could not be excluded. But hear what the church herſelf ſays, article 19. " The " viſible church of Chriſt is a congregation " of faithful men, in the which the pure " word of God is preached, and the ſacra- " ments be duly miniſtered, according to

" Chriſt's

" Chriſt's ordinance, in all thoſe things " that of neceſſity are requiſite to the ſame." Now perhaps it may be referred even to the Arch-Deacon himſelf, whether the viſible church of Chriſt is not in doctrinal matters made independent of the magiſtrate. To come up to his idea, the article ought to have run thus, " The viſible church of " Chriſt is a congregation of faithful men in " which the word of God is preached *ac-* " *cording to the deciſion of the magiſtrate,*" and the ſacraments be duly adminiſtered according to the magiſtrate's ordinance. For if the *pure* word of God is to be preached and the ſacraments duly miniſtered according to Chriſt's ordinance, it is plain that the magiſtrate cannot at all interfere or make any ordinance in the matter. And if ſuch be the ſentiments of the church, and conſequently of all her *orthodox* members, has not Dr. *Balguy* paſſed a ſentence of condemnation upon the whole clergy of our eſtabliſhment, who have given their aſſent to this article, engaged to propagate, defend, and maintain the ſame, and to baniſh and drive away all contrary doctrine as ſtrange and erroneous? Has he not declared them to be a ſet of men againſt whom it highly concerns the magiſtrate to be upon his guard, and to uſe all poſſible means of excluding them from every office both in church and ſtate?

But, in truth, the Archdeacon has here bewildered himſelf by keeping to generals. The independency of the church upon the ſtate is a very vague expreſſion, and, as we have ſeen before, may be taken in very different ſenſes. But the knot will be cut immediately, if, inſtead of *the church* we ſubſtitute conſcience. Will the Archdeacon ſay that *conſcience* is independent of the magiſtrate, or dependent upon him?—Or put the queſtion thus:—If God grant a revelation to mankind, are the duties by him preſcribed to be practiſed, the doctrines by him revealed, to be believed, independently of the ſanction of the magiſtrate or not? The petitioners are of opinion that they ought, and I hope that in this he will join with them. If he ſay that this is an extraordinary caſe, I anſwer freely that it is, but it is a caſe, and the only caſe in point, at preſent, for it is the caſe of Chriſtians.—It is true that the revelation was given many years ago, but length of time can make no alteration in this matter, ſo long as the truth of the revelation is ſuppoſed. However, let us put an ordinary caſe.—Ought the great duties of natural religion to be practiſed, and the great truths of it to be believed independently of the ſanction of the magiſtrate or not?—ſurely no ſenſible man will ſay that they ought not, no man that I know of ever ſaid ſo, except perhaps Hobbes. The ſame objection that the Archdeacon here brings againſt

againſt the obligation Chriſtians are under to obey the laws of Chriſt, and believe the doctrines revealed by him independently of the ſanction of the magiſtrate, was brought by the Jews againſt Chriſt himſelf: they ſaid that he was making himſelf a king, ſetting up *imperium in imperio*, and conſequently infringing upon the rights of the magiſtrate, and therefore they accuſed him and all who favoured him of being enemies to Cæſar. When queſtioned upon this head, his anſwer was ſhort and remarkable, *My kingdom is not of this world*, and *Pontius Pilate*, a more equitable judge in this inſtance than Dr. *Balguy*, declared he found no fault in him.

In ſhort, to ſuppoſe the doctrines contained in any book whatever to be revealed by God to mankind, and at the ſame time to ſuppoſe that theſe doctrines muſt have the ſanction of the magiſtrate before the ſubjects are to believe them, is ſo glaring an abſurdity, that it is ſurpriſing any man of ſenſe would ſeriouſly advance it.

Upon the whole then, it appears that the power of the magiſtrate, in religious matters, doth not extend to modelling and faſhioning the doctrines of it according to his own will and pleaſure, whether it be the religion of nature or a revelation.—If any religion, as it comes from the hands of its founder, contain doctrines and enforce practices inconſiſtent with the well-being of ſociety, and the

the ſocial duties, and therefore be unfit to be tolerated, the magiſtrate may have a right to expel the profeſſors of that religion from the ſociety, or if he permit them to reſide in it, to prevent the pernicious effects of their tenets, by excluding them from all offices of truſt in the ſtate, with the diſcharge of which the principles they avowedly hold are incompatible; but he cannot pretend to admit the religion and model its doctrines at his own pleaſure. In one ſenſe he may give the rule to all his ſubjects, the only queſtion is, ſhall it be a rule of his own making or not?—And that in doctrinal matters it ought not we have already ſeen. Yet the Archdeacon inſiſts upon it that he has this privilege, and poſſeſſes it in ſo unlimited a degree, that he may, even without anſwering any good purpoſe to himſelf or to the community, wantonly, *unwiſely*, lay all or any part of his ſubjects under this alternative, to be incapable of promotion in the ſtate, or to forfeit their hopes of eternal happineſs, and this without giving them any pretence to ſay that he acts injuriouſly. He may eſtabliſh one rule to day and another tomorrow, or eſtabliſh two rules at once, conſiſtent or inconſiſtent it matters not, and require the people to adopt both.

VII.

That the principle of univerſal toleration adopted by the Archdeacon is liable to all

all the ill conſequences that would flow from the doctrine of univerſal ſupport.

Hitherto we have endeavoured to clear the petitioners from the charges brought againſt them by the Archdeacon, it is now high time to examine *his* ſcheme.

He declares himſelf an advocate for the toleration of all religions, but he ſays if all religions be ſupported by the magiſtrate,

1. He muſt ſupport oppoſite religions.
2. He muſt ſupport hurtful religions.
3. He muſt ſupport religions ſubverſive of his own authority.

The Arch-Deacon then muſt own that if all religions be tolerated by the magiſtrate,

1 He muſt tolerate oppoſite religions.
2. He muſt tolerate hurtful religions.
3. He muſt tolerate religions ſubverſive of his own authority.

What is it the Arch-Deacon means by toleration? If we may conjecture from what he himſelf ſays, it differs almoſt in nothing from an eſtabliſhment, except that the teachers of the tolerated religions are neither employed nor rewarded by the magiſtrate, but ſubſiſt on the voluntary contributions of their hearers. In a note (p. 17 of the charge) we are referred to Mr. *Locke* and Biſhop *Warburton* for the *very few* reſtraints that can be laid upon unauthorized teachers. And Dr. *Balguy* himſelf, ſpeaking

ing of thoſe unauthorized teachers uſes theſe remarkable words, " Nay, I had almoſt " ſaid let them teach as they will, provided " they will be content with the voluntary " contributions of their hearers."—And why not altogether? Provided they teach nothing repugnant to the duties men owe to each other and to the ſtate?—Provided they do not inculcate vice, ſedition, and rebellion? But however even on the Doctor's own idea they muſt have the liberty publicly to maintain, defend, preach, and inculcate the doctrines of their religion upon all who pleaſe to come and hear them, or their religion is not tolerated.—Here then the magiſtrate gives men permiſſion to teach oppoſite religions, hurtful religions, religions ſubverſive of his own authority, and whoever is by their arguments prevailed upon to join in their opinions muſt have liberty to do ſo.—And will the neglecting to provide a fixed maintenance for the teachers hinder them from propagating their tenets? So far from it that it will make them more eager to ſpread them. So long as they ſubſiſt on the voluntary contributions of their hearers, they will, even from worldly motives, be more ſolicitous to encreaſe the number of their diſciples. Whether the Archdeacon ſaw this, and held out his ſcheme of univerſal toleration only for a blind, it would be preſumptuous to determine, though from ſome expreſſions, which he has let fall, about

the

the ill conſequences of permitting contrary doctrines to be preached in the ſame town, men of warm tempers would perhaps be inclined to think he was as great an enemy to the toleration of more than one religion, or more than one form or appearance of religion, (for he uſes theſe words indiſcriminately) as he is to the ſupporting of all religions, or all forms of religion, by the magiſtrate.—However, it is now incumbent upon him to ſpeak plainly, and either declare himſelf an enemy to all *toleration* even of *Chriſtianity*, as he has declared himſelf a friend to every *eſtabliſhment*, even of *Paganiſm*, or to ſhew that the ill conſequences, he has drawn from the ſupport, will not flow from the toleration, of all religions.

VIII.

That upon the Archdeacon's own principles it is the indiſpenſable duty of the magiſtrate to ſupport all religions that get footing in the ſtate, employ and reward their miniſters.

We have already ſeen that the doctrine of toleration, as maintained by the Archdeacon, if his reaſoning be juſt, is liable to all the ill conſequences with which he charges the ſcheme of univerſal ſupport. Let us now enquire whether his own principles will not directly conclude for all religions being ſupported, and the miniſters of all religions

being employed and rewarded by the magiſtrate.

He ſays that religion is the great bond of ſociety, and that the very worſt, even Paganiſm itſelf, is better than none.--That the bulk of mankind are incapable of uſing their reaſon on religious ſubjects, that they muſt be content with the religion which chance has thrown in their way, becauſe they can do no better, that to endeavour to reaſon with them would only fill their minds with doubt and perplexity, and the conſequence would be univerſal irreligion.

Let us now ſuppoſe that in this, or any other Chriſtian country, there were a body of Heathens or Mahommedans. They are to be ſuppoſed incapable of uſing their reaſon in religious matters (for I hope the Archdeacon will not confine this incapacity only to Chriſtians): to diſpute with them on the principles of their religion would only fill their minds with doubt and perplexity. Would you have them determine the controverſies of the learned? would you have them decide upon the attributes of the Deity, and fix the diſtinguiſhing marks between a true and falſe revelation? You might as well expect them to compute an eclipſe, or to decide between the Carteſian and Newtonian philoſophy. Chance has thrown Paganiſm or Mahommediſm in their way, and they muſt be content with it, becauſe they can do no better. To attempt to deprive

deprive them of this religion would only make them atheiſts.

If then religion be the great bond of ſociety, if it be the duty of the magiſtrate to take care that atheiſm do not taint any part of the ſubjects, and if this would infallibly be the caſe if they were left entirely without inſtruction, or the principles of their religion, as they have already received them from its inſtitutor or inſtitutors were in the leaſt called in queſtion, it muſt be his duty to take care that the profeſſors even of Paganiſm or Mahommediſm be maintained in the free and public exerciſe of their reſpective religions: he muſt take care that teachers be appointed to inſtruct them, and to ſecond the authority of parents in inſtilling the ſuppoſed truth into the minds of their children; he muſt employ them in that ſervice, and conſequently in juſtice is bound to reward them for it. He muſt alſo, above all things, be careful not to diſcountenance any of the profeſſors of this or that religion merely upon account of their religion, ſo long as they are obedient to him in other reſpects, abſtain from injuring their fellow ſubjects, and perform towards them and him the duties incumbent upon them; otherwiſe he may fill their minds with doubt and perplexity as to the truth of their religion: and he muſt, in an eſpecial manner avoid any thing that may poſſibly look like the ſlighteſt alteration, or new-modelling the doctrines and rites preſcribed by its inſtitutor

or inſtitutors. For if the people muſt take whatever religion comes in their way upon the word of their parents, teachers and governors, what muſt be the conſequence when they find the religion inculcated by their parents and teachers, condemned by their governors, the preachers of it thought unworthy of public encouragement; and the profeſſors of it ſolely on that account held incapable of bearing any office of truſt in the community? Will not this be preaching to them contradictory doctrines, and may we not fairly retort the queſtion put by the Archdeacon when ſpeaking of the magiſtrate's ſupport of oppoſite religions? "what can they think?"—What indeed upon theſe principles? Satisfy themſelves of the truth and reaſonableneſs of either opinion they cannot. There is no place for rational conviction. They have authority againſt authority. Doubt and perplexity muſt enſue, and atheiſm univerſally prevail.

And the ſame reaſoning will hold if the magiſtrate profeſs a religion in common with his ſubjects which religion he is deſirous to eſtabliſh. He muſt from motives of policy be as tender of really making, or even ſeeming to make the leaſt alteration in its doctrines as delivered by its founder: and if he think him no impoſtor, he muſt believe the account he has given of his doctrines true, and ſufficient to lead men to the truth becauſe it has led him to it: neither can he

believe

believe that it gives any countenance to pernicious, to dangerous, or even to falſe and abſurd opinions in religious matters. To the motives of policy then muſt be ſuperadded thoſe of juſtice, of equity, of religion itſelf; and the reſpect which he muſt have for that book, which, to him at leaſt, muſt be the ſole director both of faith and practice, will prevent him from thinking a ſincere aſſent to what it contains, conſiſtent with every or with any miſchief or abſurdity. He muſt then be obliged to continue this code of doctrine in uſe by every motive, that can, conſiſtently with virtue, religion, and ſound policy actuate the heart of man. And if he continue this in uſe it will be the higheſt abſurdity at the ſame time to declare any ſet of men, againſt whom he has nothing poſitive to object, incapable of offices of truſt whether civil or religious, under his government, when they are willing to declare their unfeigned aſſent to all and every the articles of faith, as laid down in that formulary, from which he owns he drew his own belief, merely becauſe they hold that and that alone ſufficient ſecurity.

And, upon the Archdeacon's principles, what muſt be the conſequence if the magiſtrate give another rule different from the former, as containing likewiſe the doctrines his ſubjects are to believe? Whether as a comment or not, ſignifies nothing; both are held out to them for their belief, and they muſt

must not only ſay that both are true, but that both are the ſame truth; at the ſame time that they are told one cannot but be true, and yet may be ſincerely aſſented to, in conſiſtency with every miſchief and abſurdity; the other may be falſe, and yet aſſent to it is inconſiſtent with any miſchief or abſurdity.

Let the Archdeacon anſwer, would not this be ſufficient to fill with doubt and perplexity the minds of plain men, who are not uſed to the quirks of logic, to the nice diſtinctions of the ſchools?

If theſe be theological truths, well might he ſay, that many who can comprehend all the ſublimities of the Newtonian ſyſtem, may yet be far from competent judges of ſuch more ſublime ſcience.—This indeed is abſtruſe doctrine, and what the untutored reaſon of common Chriſtians can have no conception of.

Let them lay their fingers on their mouths while the magiſtrate by his echo, the clergy, cries out, *Favete linguis. Procul o procul eſte profani—totoque abſiſtite luco.*

But ſurely the Archdeacon entirely forgot he was ſpeaking to an Engliſh Proteſtant audience when he undertook to repreſent the clergy as real puppets danced by a maſter-wire in the hands of the magiſtrate. Or perhaps he took them for ſo many abſtract clergymen, members of his abſtract eſtabliſhed church,

which

which is every church and no church. Yet, whatever idea of his own order or of himſelf his humility might then ſuggeſt to him, I would beg leave to remind him that the magiſtrate in this country is * accountable to the community for the diſcharge of his duty, that *he* is in a place of truſt, and of the higheſt truſt: he is beſides a Chriſtian magiſtrate, and as he is not, upon the Archdeacon'sidea, bound to take his notions of Chriſtianity from any thing but the ſcriptures, and he may give to his ſubjects whatever model of doctrine he thinks agreeable to them, what ſecurity has the people that he does not hold opinions which render him entirely unfit for any office either in church

* I am not certain that Dr. *Balguy* will allow this, ſince every body is acquainted with the ſentiments of *Hobbes* upon the ſubject. The old gentleman of *Malmſbury* has fallen into a ſort of abſurdity in his reaſoning, which ſome of our churchmen have ſeen and can eaſily avoid. He derives the power of his *ſovereign* from a *covenant* and yet makes that power arbitrary. I have by me a copy of the *common-wealth* improved by the marginal notes of two different annotators. One of them remarks upon this contract of Mr. *Hobbes*, " that the power is given to Kings, or ſupreme governors by God and not by the people: and therefore are they called Gods—I have ſaid ye are Gods." It is added by the other—" ſo ſays the prieſt that would be a Biſhop."

Hobbes aſſerts a power annexed to the ſovereignty of appointing perſons who ſhall examine the doctrines of all books before they be publiſhed." This is mentioned becauſe Dr. *Balguy* ſeems to have overlooked it and by that means to have left his plan defective. The hint I hope will be acknowledged in a new edition of the charge.

or ſtate, when aſſent to the ſcriptures is conſiſtent with every abſurdity and miſchief? —But to return :

After what has been ſaid, I think it may now be fairly aſked whether the Archdeacon, even upon his own principles can deny Pagans, Mahommedans, and Papiſts, an entrance into the public miniſtry. That the petitioners may, in conſiſtency with their ſcheme, we have already ſeen, but he cannot. We may alſo aſk him whether upon his principles the magiſtrate ought to give his ſubjects a rule for their religion? Whether the rights of private judgment ought to be inviolate, if they be not inviolable; and whether the magiſtrate may, by the arbitrary maxim, *for ſuch is our pleaſure*, incapacitate any ſet of men from being public teachers, becauſe they will not agree to teach by his rule? Muſt not the church upon his idea be independent of the magiſtrate, ſo independent indeed, that whatever be her tenets, however abſurd, however pernicious, however deſtructive, not only of virtue but even of the magiſtrate's authority, he muſt not pretend to make the leaſt reform, not even ſtrives to convince his ſubjects of the bad tendency, of the falſehood and abſurdity of their tenets? for their religion, however bad it may be, is ſtill better than none. Such is the tendency of the Archdeacon's principles, they in truth lead to the defence of every eſtabliſhment,

except

except a Proteſtant eſtabliſhment; but they alſo lead directly to the very principle the Archdeacon ſet up to combat, under the miſtaken notion that with it the cauſe of the petitioners muſt ſtand or fall.

IX.

Examination of the Archdeacon's replies to ſome of the objections urged by the petitioners.

Perhaps what has already been ſaid might be ſufficient to ſhew the inconcluſiveneſs of the Archdeacon's reaſonings againſt the petitioners, but as I would not willingly give any handle to ſay that only ſome parts of his work had been picked out when it was pretended to anſwer the whole, it will not be improper to take a curſory view of the anſwers he has given to the objections aledged by the petitioners againſt the preſent mode of ſubſcription, in which I ſhall follow nearly his own order.

1. The firſt objection drawn from the rights of private judgment has been already taken notice of; and as that plea has been ſtated at full length, leſs need be ſaid of it here. The Archdeacon thinks it ſufficient to obſerve that it is not private judgment but public promotion that is wanted.—It has been already ſhewn that incapacitating men for public promotion, when admitting them would be attended with no ill conſe-

quence either to church or ſtate, is a real injury. We ſhall only add here that the Archdeacon ſeems to grant to the petitioners or at leaſt to argue with them upon the principle that the right of private judgment is inviolable. But if all the denizens of a ſtate have a right to a chance for promotion, as far as is conſiſtent with the good of the ſociety, and an inviolable right to private judgment, laying them under the alternative of loſing either the one or the other is doing them flagrant injuſtice. And if it be uſeful, if it be neceſſary for the well being of the ſtate that there be a ſet of men provided to fill certain offices, laying ſuch wanton, unneceſſary reſtraints upon them, exacting from them an impoſſibility, or declaring them incapable of filling an office, which yet they are capable of filling without detriment to the ſociety, is offering a ſenſible injury to the whole, becauſe it is preventing all men from ſerving the ſtate except upon terms that no man ought, or indeed can comply with, for no man can part with a right that is inviolable.

But this is repetition, neither ſhould it have been mentioned here, had it not been in order to obviate an odd kind of cavil, which however is not peculiar to the Archdeacon; viz. that in this kingdom neither church nor ſtate claim any authority over conſcience (*vide* Charge, p. 15, note.) How this can poſſibly be aſſerted by any man who has

read

read our articles, is aſtoniſhing. In the very article quoted by the Archdeacon, the church claims authority in controverſies of faith. But theſe words have no kind of ſenſe, if where conſciences differ the church has not authority to decide the controverſy, and ſubject both to her deciſion: for it would be abſurd to claim authority, and at the ſame time ſay it ought not to be ſubmitted to.—Or ſhall we ſay that in controverſies of faith, conſcience has nothing to do?—The Archdeacon goes on, "The ſtate forces no man to believe our articles, or to profeſs his belief of them, only they who diſſent are thought unqualified for the public ſervice *.—That

* And the high privilege which our opponents allow us of quitting the church is ſufficient to ſilence every complaint of injuſtice. When Cromwell and Hazelrig had embarked for America, they would have been unjuſt in complaining againſt the precedent conduct of the King, had he ſuffered them to depart in peace. This is curious reaſoning for the year of our Lord 1773.

Upon Hobbes's principle, which the Archdeacon ſeems to have adopted, viz. that "the monarch, or the ſovereign aſſembly only, hath immediate authority from God to teach and inſtruct the people," the petitioners can indeed have no right to complain of being laid under the burthen of ſubſcription, or incapacitated for preferment upon their refuſal. They may indeed demand a ſight of the revelation given immediately to the ſovereign, empowering him to teach them what he pleaſes for truth; and when they have ſeen it they can only lament that they have ſo long been under an erroneous perſuaſion, that the Chriſtian revelation was a ſufficient rule of teaching both for ſovereign and ſubjects.

is, in plain terms, they are incapacitated from enjoying ſome privileges which other members of the community enjoy. And is it not exerciſing dominion over conſcience, when the ſtate thinks it has a right, merely for a matter of conſcience to debar any man from any privilege he would otherwiſe have a right to? The King of France might juſt as well ſay that he does not exert authority over conſcience, he only thinks every man who holds ſuch and ſuch opinions, incapable of being uſeful to their country in any other way than rowing in his gallies.—Surely the Archdeacon *really* thinks the bulk of mankind incapable of uſing their reaſon on religious ſubjects.

Making a difference between the terms of ſalvation and the terms of admiſſion into the church is equally extraordinary. By our articles, purity of doctrine is made eſſential to ſalvation; for the opinion that men may be ſaved by the law or ſect they profeſs is expreſly condemned. The church then will admit no ſuch diſtinction, nor allow that man to be qualified for ſalvation who holds any unſound doctrine; and it would be ridiculous in her afterwards to declare a man holds doctrines which, though they do not diſqualify him for ſalvation yet diſqualify him from being a teacher, as it would be ſaying that what with Chriſt is ſound doctrine may in the opinion of the Church of England be hereſy. In ſhort, upon her principles,

principles, the man who holds any doctrines contrary to the purity of the Chriſtian faith is unfit for ſalvation, but he who holds none contrary to that purity, can hold none that render him unfit to be a Chriſtian teacher. —Indeed what Chriſtian church can ſhut the door againſt the man to whom Chriſt throws wide the gates of heaven, and yet pretend that Chriſt is their only law-giver?

It is here to be remembered that we are ſpeaking of doctrinal matters, not of the mode of worſhip, or ceremonial of religion

The paſſage quoted from Dr. *Clarke* is totally unintelligible, unleſs we are to take the articles as *articuli pacis*, which no man can do that examines the form of ſubſcription. Sorry indeed I am that ſo great, ſo good a man as the Doctor, was forced by his engagements to the eſtabliſhment, to deſcend to ſo futile a quibble.

2. The Archdeacon ſays, that "the inexpedience of the laws requiring ſubſcription is ſupported by a variety of aſſertions, but many of them falſe, moſt of them foreign to the queſtion in debate.—It is not true that we elevate human authority to a level with divine."—Not true, Mr. Archdeacon? When the petitioners brought this charge they ſupported it with a reaſon, and that reaſon ought to have been proved inſufficient.—But however, I am inclined

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to think that in truth the articles are not elevated to a level with the ſcriptures, they have the place of honour aſſigned them, they are ſet in the throne; the ſcriptures are only their privy council by whoſe advice the articles determine and decide.—Try to regulate your faith by the ſcriptures ſays the church, but after you have done that, you muſt make uſe of another rule to correct it by, for the ſcriptures are neither ſo clear nor ſo exact as the articles, and for truth the articles are at leaſt equal to them. Is it not now manifeſt that the articles and the ſcriptures are not put upon a level, and conſequently that this aſſertion of the petitioners is not true?

3. The next objection brought by the Petitioners he ſays is, that ſubſcription to the Articles precludes the uſe of arguments from ſacred writ againſt the enemies of revelation.

To which he replies, with what face can this be affirmed by thoſe who know that the *beſt* defenders of Chriſtianity, and the beſt expounders of the ſacred writings are to be found in the boſom of this church?

The Petitioners have too great a regard for the Church, and pay too much reſpect to thoſe eminent champions for Chriſtianity, to deny them the palm; they will, if the Archdeacon pleaſes, extol them above all that ever have appeared in the world, though methinks I hear Mr. Mauduit aſk if Meſſrs. Lardner,

Lardner, Chandler, &c. &c. &c. were to be found in the boſom of this Church?—But this is not the queſtion. The Archdeacon ſpeaks as if the Petitioners meant that ſubſcription to the Articles precluded the uſe of all arguments in favour of Chriſtianity, when it is evident to common ſenſe that they only meant that by that ſubſcription they were precluded from the uſe of ſome ſtrong arguments in its favour. Whether the members of this Church have produced the beſt *defences* of Chriſtianity, and the beſt expoſitions of Scripture, is nothing to the purpoſe; the only thing to be enquired is, whether theſe defences and expoſitions would not have been ſtill better, had not their authors been ſhackled by the Articles, but been allowed to give free ſcope to their private judgment.

4. The Archdeacon goes on.—"It is foreign to the purpoſe, when we are ſpeaking of eſtabliſhments in general, to ſuggeſt that our preſent articles impoſe upon us the doctrines of dark and ignorant ages."—I ſuppoſe the Archdeacon meant that it was foreign to his plan as being confined to generals to *refute* this objection. Yet ſome perhaps may imagine, that in the character he has aſſumed, it is incumbent on him to defend an eſtabliſhment made in a dark and unenlightened age, as well as any other, becauſe it is an eſtabliſhment. Or is it an abſtract eſtabliſhment which the Archdeacon

deacon wants to defend, ſuch an one as never did really exiſt, an *Univerſale a parte rei*, ſomething which like Crambe's unadminiſtered glyſter *Aptum eſt ineſſe multis, ſed ineſt nemini?* However, rather than leave the charge unrefuted, the Archdeacon ſteps a little out of his way, and alledges that the age in queſtion could not be called dark and unenlightened, becauſe it produced three eminent men, Ridley, Jewel, and Hooker. Now there is ſcarce any age, when learning has been at all cultivated, which has not produced at leaſt three eminent men, though Hooker follows at ſuch a vaſt diſtance, that Ridley might almoſt have been his grandfather.

But the Petitioners ſpeak not of *Ridley*, *Jewel*, or *Hooker*; they ſpeak of the age: And can it be ſaid that knowledge, even religious knowledge, was generally diffuſed, even among the clergy of that age? The Archdeacon will pardon me, if I ſay that he has entirely miſtaken the purport of the expreſſion uſed by the Petitioners. Their objection, when ſtated fairly, does not lie againſt the age as dark and unenlightened, nor can it be ſaid that if the age were ever ſo enlightened, their objection would be at all removed. They mentioned this circumſtance, not as their grievance, but as an aggravation of their grievance. To have a truth revealed from heaven, and expreſſed in certain words by thoſe who had the revelation, which words it is impoſſible for any man to affix ano-

another meaning to than that which they convey to his underſtanding, and after that to have a propoſition laid before him compoſed by a ſet of uninſpired men, (which may or not be conſiſtent with the former) aſſent to be required to both, and a declaration that the laſt is a true and proper explication of the firſt, this is their grievance, and it is an aggravation of their grievance that the explanatory propoſition impoſed upon them was brought into vogue, and eſtabliſhed by the conſent of a dark and unenlightened age. But whatever the age might be, the grievance remains.

5. That the preſent mode of ſubſcription expoſes the Clergy to the charge of inſincerity, the Archdeacon owns has but too much truth: he even acknowledges that it does conſiderable miſchief, but alledges that it is in a great meaſure unavoidable. Perhaps it may; yet ſurely it is expedient to give as little ground for it as poſſible: And I hope the Archdeacon will allow, that maintaining the perfect conſiſtency of two forms, one of which is declared to be infallible, the other is owned to be fallible, is even acknowledged by ſome of its defenders to be in ſeveral inſtances contradictory, in others inaccurate; to profeſs that we hold one of the formularies to contain all and every part of our faith, to be a clear and ſufficient rule, both for faith and practice, and in the ſame breath to affirm that notwithſtanding it is not ſufficient to guard againſt the moſt pernicious tenets and prac-

tices—I ſay, it is to be hoped even the Archdeacon himſelf will allow that this is giving too much ground for ſuſpicion, eſpecially in men who ought to avoid even the appearance of evil.

6. The charge of inhumanity, in excluding men from the miniſtry who have ſpent their time and their fortune in preparing for it, and cannot now enter with advantage into any other, the Archdeacon gets over juſt as eaſily as the former, by ſaying it admits of no remedy. Neceſſity, Milton has ſaid, is the Tyrant's plea. The petitioners alledged the inhumanity of this excluſion, upon the ſuppoſition that there was a remedy; and they ſtill think that they have ſhewn the excluſion of ſuch as offer to comply with the terms they have propoſed, to be unjuſt, inexpedient, unneceſſary, and therefore they ſtile it inhuman. It is ſaid that they would pay no regard to this plea, if urged in favour of Roman-Catholics.—-What plea?—-Some writers have a ſtrange method of disjoining things that ought not to be ſeparated. The plea of the petitioners is not merely, we have laid out ſo much money, and ſpent ſo much time, in endeavouring to qualify ourſelves for a certain office, therefore give us this office, whether we be really qualified for it or not. Their plea is, we have really qualified ourſelves for this office, and are incapable of any other; do not then *wantonly*, *unwiſely*, without any neceſſity or *advantage* to the

ſtate,

ſtate, even in contradiction to common juſtice, and all the rules of the religion you profeſs, incapacitate us from holding this office.

It is in confidence of the juſtice of their cauſe that they make this requeſt, and only upon convincing the world of that juſtice, do they ground the hope that their complaints will be redreſſed. Shew them that their plea is unjuſt and inexpedient, and they will ſubmit without a murmur. But till that can be done, they muſt petition for redreſs; and till the Papiſts can bring as good reaſons for granting them the ſame privileges as the Petitioners plead for, they cannot be charged with inconſiſtency in wiſhing to exclude them.

When the Papiſts take the oaths of ſupremacy and allegiance, give up the authority of tradition, and the deciſions of the Church in things to be believed for neceſſity of ſalvation, adopt the Scriptures interpreted by every man's common ſenſe and reaſon, as the only rule of faith and practice, its plain and expreſs words as the only teſt of ſound doctrine, that is, when Papiſts ceaſe to be Papiſts, then, and not till then, will they have a right to ſolicit admiſſion into employments either in Church or State.

Of the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance.—Whether the Petitioners can take them, in conſiſtency with their

principles.—Of the Canon of the Scriptures.

We have already ſeen that the Archdeacon, in his zeal for the Articles, has declared conſcientious ſubſcription to the Scripture conſiſtent with every abſurdity and miſchief. In the concluſion of his charge he endeavours to prove that Clergymen, by taking the oaths of ſupremacy and allegiance, give no ſecurity, either to Church or State, which can be at all depended upon. In order to prove this, he aſks, will the oaths of ſupremacy and allegiance, without any other proviſion, ſecure the uniformity of public religion? What does the Archdeacon mean by the uniformity of public religion? Is it uniformity in externals, in the mode of worſhip, and the ceremonial—things that concern not the faith, and which are no farther neceſſary than to prevent diſorder and confuſion in public aſſemblies? It is anſwered that they will.—Will they reſtrain the teachers of hurtful doctrines? They will reſtrain all men from teaching doctrines hurtful to the conſtitution and government, all doctrines tending to promote either ſedition or rebellion, as far as taking an oath againſt any practice, can reſtrain the Jurors from that practice.

If by hurtful doctrines be meant doctrines hurtful to the purity of the Chriſtian faith, it is anſwered that that is ſufficiently provided

vided againſt by their ſolemn declaration to preach no doctrine as religious which cannot be proved from Scripture; and all doctrines contrary to the Chriſtian faith are alſo contrary and manifeſtly contrary to Scripture.

The other query, whether they would be ſufficient to exclude from our Churches the men who would ſet up an Eccleſiaſtical kingdom in the midſt of the Civil, and require their ſovereign in return to bend the knee to their deciſions, is ridiculous. By the oath of ſupremacy, no deciſion can be made without the aſſent of the Magiſtrate; the deciſions of the Church then are his; and I hope the Archdeacon will allow, that it is no derogation to the dignity of the magiſtrate to bend the knee to them. But ſome things have been decided by Chriſt, and delivered immediately from heaven, and to them ſurely no *Chriſtian* magiſtrate will refuſe to bend the knee.

But let us conſider the reaſons alledged by the Archdeacon, to prove that it would be inconſiſtent in the Petitioners to take theſe oaths. "If," ſays he (p. 20), "oaths of "whatever kind are lawful and neceſſary, "the difficulty is ſhifted only, not removed. "For theſe too may expoſe us to the charge "of inſincerity; theſe too may be the occa-"ſion of great hardſhips to worthy and con-"ſcientious men. Many of us may remem-"ber the time, when even the oath of al-

legiance

" legiance was conſidered as an arbitrary
" impoſition, and as much artifice uſed to
" explain it away, as our adverſaries may
" have found neceſſary to explain away the
" moſt intractable of the 39 Articles."

The Archdeacon then is of opinion that the Petitioners ought to reject the oaths of allegiance and ſupremacy, as ſubjecting them to the charge of inſincerity, as well as ſubſcribing to the Articles. But he gives us not a ſhadow of proof for this aſſertion, unleſs we will take this, that both are ſolemn declarations of our own ſentiment. But merely taking an oath doth not expoſe men to the charge of inſincerity. It is taking the oath, and acting or ſpeaking inconſiſtently with what they bound themſelves to by that oath. The Archdeacon owns that the charge of inſincerity which the Clergy are liable to from ſubſcribing to the Articles, does conſiderable miſchief; and adds, that that miſchief is in a great degree unavoidable; the charge then is in a great degree unanſwerable; for a charge that may be juſtly and clearly anſwered, can never, when men have freedom to exculpate themſelves, unavoidably cauſe to them conſiderable or any miſchief.

But will the Archdeacon ſay, that the Clergy, by taking the oaths of allegiance and ſupremacy to his preſent Majeſty, and at the ſame time ſolemnly declaring their belief of all and every one of the doctrines they find revealed in the Scriptures, and that they

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hold aſſent to them a ſufficient teſt of ſoundneſs in the Chriſtian faith, lay themſelves open to a charge of inſincerity, which is in a great degree unanſwerable? I hope not. I hope the Archdeacon is a firmer, a ſincerer friend to the title of the auguſt afmily that now fills the throne, than to imagine that the ſlighteſt objection to its validity can be drawn from the principles of Chriſtianity, as ſet forth in the Scriptures much leſs that objections may be brought againſt it that are in a great degree unanſwerable. He ſays we may remember the time when even the oath of allegiance was *conſidered* as an *arbitrary* impoſition.—That is not the queſtion; we are not now ſpeaking of politics, but of religion. The Petitioners have ſaid nothing of the power of the magiſtrate to make what regulations he pleaſes in political affairs; they only beg for freedom to explain the Scriptures according to what does now, or may hereafter, upon more mature deliberation, appear to them to be their true ſenſe; and what this has to do with the oath of allegiance, is beſt known to the Archdeacon. That oath may be conſidered as an *arbitrary* impoſition, but it can be conſidered in that light by none who are not enemies to the government: and the Petitioners have over and over owned that they ought not to be admitted into any office of truſt.—Beſides, no man can conſider an impoſition as arbitrary, which is neceſſary for the very exiſtence of

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the government. That only is arbitrary which is uſeleſs and unneceſſary, for which no other reaſon can be given, but that favourite maxim of the Archdeacon, FOR SUCH IS OUR PLEASURE; and not even the greateſt enemy to the preſent government can deny that the oath of allegiance is neceſſary for its preſervation; they cannot therefore conſider it as arbitrary. They may indeed poſſibly conſider the government as unjuſt and unlawful, but that the Archdeacon has ſaid nothing of, it would have been a blot in the character of his worthy and conſcientious men, who refuſed to take the oath of allegiance, the nonjuring and jacobite clergy in the reign of William and Mary, who were continually ſtirring up the people to rebel, and forming plots to murder their deliverer. The Archdeacon then will own with the Petitioners, that ſolemnly declaring a belief of the Chriſtian doctrines, as laid down in the Scriptures, and adopting them as the only teſt of ſound faith, and at the ſame time taking the oaths of allegiance and ſupremacy, may be clearly ſhewn to be conſiſtent, and conſequently the charge of inſincerity ſo undeniably refuted, that the difficulty will not only be ſhifted, but totally removed.

I ſhall ſay nothing here of the illiberal reflection thrown out by the Archdeacon, as if the petitioners employed artifice to explain away the thirty-nine articles. Their petition is no proof of it. A man may look

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upon that as unneceſſary which yet he can with a ſafe conſcience give his aſſent to; and, if it be looked upon as a grievance by others, and he think that the impoſition may, without any ill conſequence, be taken off, he not only is at liberty, but in religious matters he is even bound to remove the ſtumbling-block out of his brother's way. St. Paul could, with a ſafe conſcience, obſerve every one of the Jewiſh ceremonies, yet, who more ſtrenuouſly than he, defended the liberty of Chriſtians, when it was attempted to make compliance with them the teſt of ſoundneſs in the Chriſtian faith?——Whatever the archdeacon may think, men are not always ſo totally abſorbed in ſelf-intereſt, as to be entirely careleſs of what becomes of others, when they are at eaſe themſelves.—But to return.

The archdeacon was aware that the petitioners would tell him theſe were political teſts, the lawfulneſs whereof they allowed. He anſwers, in the firſt place that, in a variety of caſes, there is extreme difficulty of diſtinguiſhing between political and religious opinions. Poſſibly there may be, eſpecially among men whoſe politics are their religion, and their religion politics. Whenever the deciſions of the magiſtrate are admitted as religion, confuſion muſt enſue. But the petitioners do not think the ſcriptures ſo imperfect a guide as not clearly to point out what is the duty of every man in every ſtate,

or not to ſhew what things are to be obſerved becauſe enacted by God himſelf, or what may indifferently be practiſed or omitted, becauſe enjoined or not by the magiſtrate. The ſcripture hath ſaid, that if a man even in the moſt trivial matters, acts in a manner which he is not ſure is innocent, he is guilty of ſin; and if notwithſtanding we cannot without extreme difficulty diſtinguiſh what they command us to do, from what they have left to the deciſion of the magiſtrate, or to our own liberty, our ſituation muſt be dreadful indeed. Happily, our Lord thought differently; he had ſo little notion of its being a matter of extreme difficulty to diſtinguiſh between religion and politics, that he gave this general direction, *Render unto Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's, and to God the things that are God's*; a precept which it was impoſſible he ſhould have delivered in ſo general a manner, had it been a matter of extreme difficulty to diſtinguiſh what is Cæſar's from what is God's. The apoſtle John has ſaid, that they who believe in Chriſt ſhall be led εις πασαν την αληθειαν into all the truth, that is moſt certainly all religious truth, and if ſo they cannot be at a loſs to diſtinguiſh between religion and politics.

But it ſeems after all that the oath of ſupremacy is a religious teſt, and the petitioners have declared againſt all religious teſts except the ſcriptures. But how are we to be ſure that it is a religious not a political teſt?

teſt? As the Archdeacon has given no proof of his aſſertion, and it ſeems from his complaint of extreme difficulty, that he is ſometimes gravelled in theſe matters, let us try if we cannot in this caſe help him out.

That which derives its whole authority from human laws, and which may without a crime be enjoined or abrogated by them is no part of Chriſtian faith: but ſuch is the doctrine of the King's ſupremacy; therefore that doctrine is no part of our religion, nor the oath of ſupremacy a religious teſt. To illuſtrate this, ſuppoſe that at the reformation, the Houſe of Commons had been by law veſted with the power of ſupremacy which the King now enjoys, it would then, doubtleſs, according to the Archdeacon's notion, have been part of the Chriſtian faith to believe in the ſupremacy of the Houſe of Commons, whereas at preſent, it ſeems a belief of the King's ſupremacy is part of the Chriſtian faith.

But the Archdeacon's laſt argument is the moſt extraordinary of any. According to him, it ſeems, that no man can declare that he holds the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament to be the ſole and only teſt of ſound faith without being guilty of inconſiſtency, becauſe "the number of canonical "books, the integrity of each, the degree "of inſpiration, are points on which honeſt "men may poſſibly differ. And if they do, "how ſhall they all ſubſcribe to the truth

" of the Scriptures? not moſt certainly in
" the ſame ſenſe, and in the ſame extent
" with each other. What then becomes of
" the ſacred right of private judgment?
" How ſhall we eſcape the imputation of
" inſincerity? Why ſhould we be tied down
" eſpecially in matters of criticiſm, by the
" judgment of dark and ignorant ages?"

This is very artful, but I cannot allow the Archdeacon the praiſe of invention. Let him look into the writings of almoſt any Jeſuit that has ever engaged in controverſy againſt the Proteſtants, and he will find exactly the ſame argument. I dare ſay that he is too well read in controverſy not to recollect his author. When the Proteſtants rejected the deciſions of the Church, unleſs warranted by Scripture, theſe champions for the Eſtabliſhment replied, you have Scripture itſelf on the deciſion of the Church and no other authority, you are therefore inconſiſtent with yourſelves in refuſing to ſubmit to her deciſions in a particular doctrine, when you ſubmit to her deciſion for the whole of your doctrine.

But it is eaſy to reply to the Archdeacon's argument, from what we ſaid before on the plea of private judgment: we have there ſhewn that it is not at all inconſiſtent with their plea to exclude from the Church ſuch as deny the truth of the Scriptures, becauſe they cannot conſiſtently with that diſbelief accept an office in the Chriſtian Church; and

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private judgment cannot give them a right to act contrary to its own dictates. The number of canonical books, the integrity of each, the degree of inſpiration, have nothing to do in the queſtion, any farther than in theſe books as they have come down to us, we have a compleat, genuine collection of all the doctrines of Chriſtianity as delivered by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, without any variation in matters of moment.

Let it always be kept in view, that this is a diſpute not only between Chriſtians and Chriſtians, but between Proteſtants and Proteſtants, between men who ſet out on theſe principles, that Jeſus Chriſt was really commiſſioned by heaven to give a revelation to mankind, that all the doctrines he revealed, all the duties he preſcribed, are truly and faithfully ſet down in the Scriptures, and that we now have them among us without any variation which can poſſibly taint the purity of that religion; and the petitioners inſiſt only on Chriſtian clergymen having the privilege of interpreting theſe Scriptures, according to what ſhall appear on a careful and impartial examination to be their true meaning; not that men may be appointed Chriſtian teachers whether they believe the truth of the Chriſtian religion or not.

Indeed the requeſt the petitioners have made is even more modeſt than this; for it amounts only to this, that no clergyman ſhall be deemed a Heretic, or a ſetter forth

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of ſtrange and erroneous doctrine, unleſs it can be fairly and undeniably proved, that what he preaches is contrary to the plain and expreſs words of Scripture. They petition not for their doctrine any more than their lives being ſet entirely free from the inſpection of their ſuperiors; they only petition that the law by which they ſhall be tried, may be the Scriptures not the Articles.

Let us ſuppoſe, that a clergyman after having ſubſcribed to the Articles is accuſed of preaching heretical doctrine, how is he to be judged? Are not thoſe before whom he is to be tried, to determine whether his doctrine be contrary to the plain and expreſs words of the Articles, according as their conſcience and the beſt lights they have to determine their meaning? And will the defenders of the Articles ſay, that the clergyman can take the meaning of the Articles to be any other than that which his common ſenſe dictates to him, or that this ſets him looſe from all inſpection, unleſs a comment be made upon the Articles, and eſtabliſhed by authority, and another upon that, and ſo on *ad infinitum?* for private judgment muſt be the laſt reſource; and if men are to be judged by any law, they muſt be judged by that law interpreted by the private judgment of the tribunal before which they are arraigned. They plead then, let the law by which they are tried be the expreſs words of

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Scripture: they give a ſolemn declaration that they will not knowingly preach any thing contradictory to its doctrines; if they do, before they be puniſhed, let them be tried by an impartial tribunal, which ſhall give ſufficient ſecurity that it ſits there to declare nothing to be hereſy, becauſe it has been declared to be ſo by any man or ſet of men uninſpired, but becauſe it is contrary to the expreſs letter of the Scriptures.

But let us not confound the judicial with the legiſlative capacity. In matters of doctrine, the magiſtrates of the Church, for the time being, may have power to determine and judge in particular caſes that ſhall come before them; but that authority can extend no farther than the particular caſe and time; and their deciſion neither binds up poſterity, nor even themſelves, from determining otherwiſe when they have more light.

In matters of faith the Scriptures are, confeſſedly, our only laws; let us not then tack to them a bundle of deciſions made by Church-men or Church-governors; for that would be as great a ſoleciſm in religion, as it would be in civil affairs to permit the twelve judges, for inſtance, to draw up a number of general rules with a ſanction annexed, and publiſh them as equally valid with acts of parliament, and to be followed as implicitly as thoſe acts, by all who ſhall hereafter ſit upon the bench.

It is for want of diſtinguiſhing between theſe two capacities, that ſo much confuſion has been introduced into this controverſy. If what has here been ſaid tend in any degree to clear it up and ſet it in a proper light, the end of this attempt will be fully anſwered. On which ever ſide of the queſtion the truth lie, it is the prayer of the author that that may be victorious. If the requeſt of the petitioners be deſtructive of all government and religion, may it be rejected. If on the contrary, as at preſent he ſincerely believes, it be perfectly juſt and reaſonable, and manifeſtly tend to promote the cauſe of piety, virtue, and religion among men, may the eyes of the legiſlature be opened, and the prayer of the petition be granted.

THE END.

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